THE New Republic

How Near Is The End of the Fourth Republic?

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A Conversation with James Thurber

"Everybody Is Getting Very Serious"

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Who Sent Nixon? . . . . . *Gerald W. Johnson*

Whither Orson Welles . . . *Stanley Kauffmann*

Gorky—the Great Hater . . . *R. A. Scott-James*

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Washington Wire

A Government Divided

WASHINGTON today sees Congress taking ascendancy over a weak President under a governmental system that puts a premium on coolness between the two. Let us pause briefly, just this once, to look at the system itself.

Across the water France wavers toward possible dictatorship; why?—because the founders of the Fourth Republic were so afraid of a dictatorship that they paved the way for it. In lesser degree our Founding Fathers, too, were obsessed with the danger of a man on horseback and gave us a divided government as a precaution—a government that thwarts us still.

Our system has more give than the French; we get occasional "strong" Presidents—like Jefferson, Jackson, Wilson, Roosevelt—but it takes a crisis to do it. Maybe Eisenhower will create such a crisis that we will get another strong man in 1960. But the question this column asks is whether, in our kind of world we can ever again afford anything but strong Presidents?

Separation of powers is so natural to us that we take it for granted, but it astonishes foreigners like a nation trying to live under water. It is the heart of almost anything that happens here. Who is really in charge in Washington? Who is running the store? Why, partly the White House and partly Congress. Occasionally they see eye to eye, but more often they operate in the Athenian system of dispatching an army with two generals — who command on alternate days! The system is awkward enough when President and Congress belong to the same party, but it becomes positively baffling when (as now) political control is divided—a situation Eisenhower will know for six of his eight troubled years.

It will take a terrible jolt before America alters its cherished system, a system which supplies the landscape with the kind of romantic ruin it so lacks in archeology. Strong Presidents help to limber the system up, but they are immensely hard to get. Our method of picking Presidential candidates stresses negative characteristics—having few enemies, having little controversial background in politics. The result is that often a wholly inexperienced man comes to Washington, an Eisenhower, a Hoover, to wage his war with Congress against political experts.

We choose a Presidential candidate for his availability rather than for his ability. Over in London or up in Canada (or Sweden, or Australia or Holland) the legislature is the training school for executive responsibility. But our system, by contrast, frustrates and eliminates the great legislative leaders — Clay, Webster, LaFollette, Taft — from the Presidency. They have taken too many positions, made too many enemies.

Business doesn't object. It has a vested interest in a weak government. In America, Divine Right means the right of business to freedom from control. The two political parties haven't differed much in this—each has tended to be a legislative agent of business. Now and then business stupidity brings collapse—Wall Street in 1929, the Detroit tycoons today—and then government's job is to bail business out. Then free enterprise takes over again. As a result the US has the most conservative government in the free world.

Striking the Average

EVERY SO often we ought to dust off this system and examine it. Now is a good time because voters are alarmed. France is tottering. A Soviet Sputnik flashes overhead. At home we have a recession—everyone is being hopeful about it; the slogan is, "Things are getting worse more slowly." But it continues. . . . Is our divided government adequate to meet such challenges?

Well, Eisenhower—to his credit—is finally trying to get some major bills through—Pentagon reorganization and the trade and aid bills. We guess that in the emergency Congress will pass them all. But the process will be typical. When they are born they will cry "Daddy" to scores of men. They are sired by the averaging-out process; nobody will be fully responsible.

So much for the White House. How about Congress? The separation of powers hobbles Congress, too. Congress is not equipped for initiative or leadership. It is a guardian against a dictator, arranged for that purpose, and hostile to the President instinctively — Congressmen can only get attention by attacking the White House. But Congress can't plan. It can water down Presidential proposals, kill them, even force the Executive to administer bills it opposes, but it can't give steady, coherent direction.

True, Congress does what has to be done and even forces a reluctant President to act on anti-recession tax cuts, say, but its whole tendency is to settle down into a lusterless caretaker coalition, fragmented into geographical and economic alliances.

Who Has the Ball?

OUR AMBLING government makes the parliamentary system look like a jet airplane by contrast. I defy any outsider to say who is responsible in Washington today for delays in school bills, social security bills, anti-recession measures or the collapse, say, of the investigation of regulatory agencies. It is like watching a couple of football games played simultaneously on the same field, and trying to say who has the ball.

"Authority is perplexingly subdivided and distributed," said Woodrow Wilson, "and responsibility has to be hunted down in out-of-the-way corners."

How can the voter punish or reward, let alone figure out what is happening?

The separation of powers is essentially negative. It exists to prevent something from happening, not to make something happen. It exists in a world that moves faster every day, where danger flies overhead. Mostly it means irresponsibility and delay. It can be ameliorated by a strong President, but the odds are against his selection. Yet the one mortal lesson for us to learn now, I think, is that we can't afford weak government.

Look at the sky: that's the Sputnik. Look overseas: that's France.

T.R.B.

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Correspondence

► *Deutschland Uber Alles?*

SIRS:

SINCE World War II, I have read hundreds of thousands of words, by Englishmen and Americans, on the subject of German reunification. These articles by the great, by the near-great, and by the not-so-great, have expressed

(Continued on page 23)

Other American Ways

A YOUNG LADY at the Republican National Committee was telephoning newsmen on Tuesday, May 13, two days before Vice President Nixon's return, advising that a "spontaneous movement" was afoot to give him a hero's welcome. Having recorded this fact for history and endorsed James Reston's wry observation that "a national defeat has been parlayed into a personal political triumph," we must observe also that Mr. Nixon's own behavior since his return has been sensible. The fact that he didn't revert to his habit of blaming it all on Communism or Communist agitators does not in itself guarantee that he will not later fall from grace and weaken in his resolve to get to the heart of our failures in Latin America.

But what Mr. Nixon has said so far about the economic causes of anti-Americanism and the consequences of our seeming national tolerance for dictatorships does encourage us to hope that Administration and Congressional policy reviews now beginning will deal in fundamentals. These fundamentals are Latin resentment at being taken for granted by official United States policy and, on the other hand, fear of being milked by United States business.

Latin American leaders are rarely consulted on matters affecting the foreign affairs of all nations in the Western hemisphere—unless their votes are needed in the United Nations. Many US diplomats assume they have been put on the shelf if they are assigned to Latin America. And at Western hemisphere meetings our representatives have been known to brush aside Latin resolutions without even bothering to introduce counter-proposals

Latin American leaders point out too that although they have made great economic strides after centuries of mass poverty (and despite a population growth-rate twice the world average), a major economic breakthrough requires intelligent and consistent consideration by their rich neighbor to the north. Instead their economic progress has been blocked in some instances by our economic policies. When Latin American governments talk of coffee exports or US tariffs on lead, zinc and tin, they are asking us to remember the direct relationship between the rate of their economic development and the availability of markets for these primary commodities.

Similarly, when the governments of such countries as Argentina and Brazil decide that oil shall be a state monopoly, they ask us to respect their decision that state control of natural resources will best serve their rapid economic development. If Mr. Nixon means therefore to apply the lessons of the past month, he will urge a review of prevailing US policies which are based primarily on respect for the US private investor.

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Exploring Space

IT WILL BE three years, by present plans, before the US will have the rocket power to launch a satellite the size of Sputnik III, according to Gen. Bernard Schriever, one of the US Air Force's most enthusiastic spacemen. (The rocket engine required to put the 3,000-pound cone—100 times the weight of Explorers I and II—into orbit must have had a thrust of half a million pounds. The Air Force's mighty intercontinental Atlas can only achieve a total of 360,000 pounds with its three engines.) Since the Soviet Union is obviously not going to be relaxing while we try to catch up to their present capability, we must assume that the Russians will stay well ahead of us in the space contest until well into the 1960's. That most probably means that they will be the first to install TV cameras in satellites for surveillance, the first to place a man in orbit around the earth, and the first to land a pay load on the moon—with the unflattering headlines in the world press that will go along with these exploits.

Leaders of the special Senate and House Committees on Space and Astronautics, which have spent the spring in hearings on the Administration's bill to create a Civilian Space Agency, believe that we can catch up to the Russians in two years instead of three if we really try. The first staff report of the House Committee, released this week after a month and a half of hearings on the Administration's bill, speaks of "the terrible urgency" of this effort and concludes that "the only way this country, and the Free World, can catch up with the achievements of the Soviet Union is by leapfrogging them."

To that end, the Committees of both houses are drastically changing the bill the President submitted. The House version, expected to be sent to the floor this week, goes far toward overcoming the weaknesses we noted in the bill first offered (*NR*, April 14, 1958):

- It settles the chief question of how to divide space projects between the military and the civilian agency by creating liaison committees, patterned after the successful AEC system, to resolve disputes or appeal them to the President. (Defense Secretary McElroy and most of the Pentagon brass believe military authorities should resolve all such disputes.)
- It authorizes cooperation with other nations in the exploration of space. (The Administration bill vaguely suggested study of this possibility.)
- It establishes an unprecedented anti-secrecy policy requiring that space agency data be made public unless specifically prevented by law.

Indications are that the Senate bill when reported out of committee will be even stronger in the direction of civilian control and international cooperation.

The question of money comes later, but clearly the intent of both Senate and House Committees is not to stint. Sometimes, however, the intention of Congress does not prevail. Congress, for example, instructed the AEC to build a series of atomic-power pilot plants a year ago, and appropriated the money for it. Budget Bureau officials are now trying to explain to the Joint Atomic Energy Committee why it has refused all year to release the funds so that the plants could be built.

Unquiet Middle East

DESPITE Suez and all the other lessons of the last few years, the Western powers are as far as ever from having a common policy in the Middle East—indeed it is not clear whether they have even separate policies. Each seems content to do nothing in particular until a major crisis develops. Then some rapid response is improvised which creates more problems than it solves: Guns to Lebanon or further naval exercises in the Mediterranean. Insofar as any general direction can be detected, our policy seems to be drifting toward the restoration of normal relations with Nasser. According to Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian and African affairs, William Rountree, this drift is inspired by the discovery that Nasser is now becoming a "true neutralist"!

Meanwhile, France is steadily strengthening the alliance with Israel which she first formed before the Suez adventure, Britain is entangled in a local war with Yemen over Aden, and something like civil war seems to be developing in the Lebanon, America's only vociferous supporter in the Arab world. US Information Services libraries have been burned to the ground in Beirut and Tripoli, and the pipeline carrying oil from Iraq has been cut. Besides the inevitable "anti-imperialist" issue, one of the problems in Lebanon is conflict between Christian and Moslem: Thus the danger of sympathetic response in Syria for the rebels is a real one.

Britain has been trying to simplify her problems in the Middle East by encouraging Kuwait, her main source of oil, to join the federation of Iraq and Jordan. But the position of our friends in Iraq is shakier than would appear from their totalitarian majority in the recent elections. Nuri es-Said, the aging dictator, has once again repeated that his Western allies cannot expect good relations with the Arab states unless they force Israel to accept the 1947 frontiers and recognize the right of the Algerians to freedom and independence. But the mere threat of a slight liberalization in France's Algerian policy has been enough to bring the Algerian French to the point of violent secession.

To complete this gloomy picture, the West's most reliable ally in the Middle East since the last war has been Turkey—although her support has been a political embarrassment in the Arab world because of her imperialist past. Now Turkey's relations with the West are

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under serious strain because Britain is seeking some compromise with Greece over Cyprus. And in Greece itself the Communist Party has re-established its position as the main opposition party with a quarter of the vote in the recent general election.

One aim of Western diplomacy in the Middle East has been to avoid having to choose between policies any of which was unacceptable to one or other part of the alliance. It begins to look as if a choice may soon be forced upon us in the most unfavorable circumstances—either to support Nasser and the mainstream of Arab nationalism at the expense of France, Israel, and even Turkey, or to risk the loss of Middle Eastern oil in all-out conflict with the Arab world, with all the disasters this would bring in the rest of Asia. Unfortunately the key to a decision may no longer lie in Western hands: it may hang on what was said in Moscow between Khrushchev and Colonel Nasser.

Two Great Journalists

TWO MEN who died last week brought such a special quality to journalism that it would be good to stop for a moment and try to define it. Elmer Davis and Thomas L. Stokes knew and wrote of men of power, but their vision was never blinded by the dazzle of the mighty. They didn't work for money, and they didn't write for fame, and if they qualified what they wrote, it was because they respected truth and not because they aimed to please.

No reality, however painful, made Elmer Davis shiver. Nor would he seek refuge in self-deception. He had a talent for the clean thrust that punctured pretense. He had, too, the gently ironic phrase with which to mock the foolish. In an earlier era when "radio commentator" meant a live intelligence rather than a Voice, Elmer Davis in his five-minute newscasts was the public affairs educator—and the conscience—of millions of Americans. He wrote leisurely essays that will live as long as there is a spirit of tolerance in the land and an appreciation of fine, simple English and clear thought. His was not, it must be said, always the voice of all of America. He did not intend it should be. He spoke for himself, and as himself he was the spokesman for many.

What made Tom Stokes unusually valuable, we think, was the fullness and intensity of his commitment of himself, and particularly of his conscience to the task of seeking truth and justice. As newspaper reporter and then syndicated columnist, his every word was evidence that he rejected any thought of compromise between truth and marketability—the kind of compromise which invites so many journalists today. Because he set the standard and—this is important—showed it to be practicable, there can be no doubt that his profession will always be in some measure the better.

China as Nuclear Power

IT MAY be the flourishing scientific partnership between China and the Soviet Union which will finally force the Eisenhower Administration to recognize the existence of the Chinese Government. For if our stated intention to work out a monitoring system which would permit cessation of nuclear bomb tests and to seek an international agreement on the use of outer space is more than propaganda, China will have to be a party to the negotiations.

The President's key adviser on the feasibility of detecting secret efforts to violate a test-ban agreement, Dr. Hans Bethe of Cornell, has stated, in little-noticed testimony before the Senate Disarmament Subcommittee on April 19, that this is the case with regard to bomb tests. After outlining the minimum essentials of a detection system to which he would consider it technically safe for the US to agree, Dr. Bethe told the Senate committee: "I believe that a set of seismic stations in both the Soviet Union *and China* (italics ours) is necessary for a good detection capability for underground bursts."

"I include China," Dr. Bethe emphasized, "even though it would be much more difficult than to reach an agreement with the Soviet Union, and even the latter is certainly difficult."

Yet the Administration, now preparing to enter into technical talks with the Russians on a test detection system, is foreclosed by our non-recognition of China from negotiating on a key part of an acceptable plan.

Soon the same problem may arise on agreements concerning outer space. China, according to a front-page editorial in *Pravda* for May 18, is out to become the world's third satellite power. *Pravda* quotes the president of the Chinese Academy of Science as saying that

> Chinese scientists are seriously studying the advanced science and technique of the Soviet Union so that China in the near future can launch its own earth satellites.

That this could be more than boastful dreaming was borne out in an unnoticed press conference given last January by Dr. Eric Walker, vice-chairman of the President's Committee on Scientists and Engineers and president of Pennsylvania State University.

Dr. Walker warned:

> In six years [from 1949 to 1955] enrollment in institutions of higher education in China increased 2½ times—from 116,000 to 288,000—and of all the students enrolled nearly half are studying science and engineering. With the Russian example before us, we should be blind indeed not to recognize this further cloud on the horizon.

But why should our government be expected to recognize a cloud, when it doesn't recognize a country when it sees one?

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Cabled from Paris—France on the Brink

Following is the comment of the North African correspondent of the liberal Paris journal *L'Express:*

"One Can't Eternally Deceive"

CONSIDER the case of General Massu who took charge of the Committee of Public Safety in Algiers. This young parachutist general came to Algiers after having covered himself with glory in the army of General Leclerc against the Germans and after having won some personal glory at Suez. He was given one of the most delicate tasks of the war: to re-establish order in Algiers, the capital, where Algerian terrorism had been taking up to six victims a day. His mission was more that of a policeman than of a soldier. But General Massu, commanding 10,000 parachutists, accepted the assignment as a soldier who does not question the orders he receives. Four months later, not a single terrorist act was being committed in Algiers. The city had resumed its prewar aspect. Even today the Algerian capital presents an unusual picture for a country at war: the beaches, movie houses, theatres and hotels are all crowded; the movement of automobiles in the streets causes traffic jams; the housing crisis is acute; and business was never more prosperous. This is what is called the battle of Algiers.

Meantime, the winner of this battle had occasion to ask himself some questions. He was popular among all the Europeans whom he had delivered from fear, but he did not let the popularity go to his head; he professed to have complete contempt for those French agitators in Algeria who are called the *ultras*, those whose blind racism makes them reject even the non-appeasement approach of Robert Lacoste. The French victory in Algiers, let it be noted, would not have been possible without torture, without the atrocious efficacy of interrogations conducted scientifically and successfully, without the dismantling of all rebel networks in the city, and the disappearance of 3,000 Moslems. The tortures deeply affected the torturers themselves. The French military became increasingly aware of the Algerian drama in which they were involved. Often they were faced by admirable rebel soldiers whose courage and sense of sacrifice impressed them. Suddenly it became noticeable that the French parachutist leaders were speaking about the Algerian nationalists more respectfully than they were about the French Government.

General Massu's wife took charge of a number of activities on behalf of the children of Algerian nationalists killed in battle. Many officers denounced the privileges of the French in Algeria and dreamed of an egalitarian French Algeria in which the victory of their army would be accompanied by a revolution benefiting the Moslems.

Yet although General Massu and his companions honestly wanted to be more liberal, they also were obsessed by the need not to be beaten militarily. Defeat has become a phobia for a French army which has been fighting for seven years in Algeria and has not had victory. They would have willingly said to the Algerians: "Do what you will with our country, but let the French flag wave over it and recognize our military victory." This attitude was constantly encouraged by the governments in Paris. It has become commonplace to say that France is a country which miraculously resists its institutions, but for some months now the miracle has not worked. A time came when the least questionable patriots in Paris were heard to say that it might be better to have the walls collapse so that sounder rebuilding could begin. Governments, most of whose members did not really think it possible to avoid negotiations with the Algerian nationalists, at the same time persuaded the army that, on the contrary, the nationalists should be wiped out to the last man. No one any longer believed in the orders which were given, and in Algeria the fighting was more and more carried out under conditions which gave the military despotic power.

General Massu who had covered up the torture of rebels, suddenly saw his frightful mission become empty. And it was then that this republican military man began to lend an ear to all the agitational movements. He was assured that the government of M. Pflimlin was going to negotiate, "to lose Algeria," in brief to betray the soldiers and their sacrifices. He was assured that General de Gaulle was waiting only for an appeal from Algiers to restore the dignity of the state in France, nor was he wrong about de Gaulle's availability. He yielded to the worst of adventures, from which he was not even to profit in terms of ambition.

☆

The temptation has naturally been great to compare the Algiers plot with the Spanish insurrection but for the moment, in any event, there has been no General Franco. De Gaulle disclaims any intent to force his way to power by armed intervention, as was not the case with Franco in 1936 in Madrid. Before the Algiers uprising the government which M. Pflimlin was forming promised to be a temporary expedient at the mercy of new coalitions of interests or parties, merely awaiting another ministerial crisis. In effect, French in Algiers said to the central government: "You asked us to keep Algeria

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French. You officially proclaimed that it was only that which you wanted. Well then, get together on this point. Set up a government of national union assured of stability throughout the length of the war in Algeria or the country will no longer have confidence in you." Or, as de Gaulle has put it, if the army is to be the instrument of the state, there must be a state! Criticism of French parliamentary institutions, after all, had come from the civilians themselves over a period of years. The Army was led by the parliamentarians themselves into an attitude of anti-parliamentarianism.

All of this does not excuse or justify the military rebellion in any way. It is an effort to explain what, alas, may some day become French fascism. These decisive days which I have watched at close hand and lived through give the answer for France, and our experiences are valid for other countries. One cannot eternally deceive and trick one's way through ordeals. One cannot permit the divorce between an army at war and a country at liberty, a fact which the Americans recognized in Korea. We have always tended to believe that the value of freedom was so great that it could resist all seducers. That is a tragic misconception from which the totalitarians profit. And when, moreover, one believes that one can keep democracy at home while creating anti-democrats in overseas wars, then one moves toward suicide. France is not yet there, but almost.

JEAN DANIEL

From *The New Republic's* correspondent in France:

"It Is the Younger Officers"

WHEN THE news first reached Paris that Gen. Jacques Massu had set up a "committee of public safety" in Algiers, it was hailed as the long feared "revolt of the generals." It would be more accurate to speak of a "revolt of the second lieutenants." The sacking of the second government building in Algiers, which ignited the revolt, does not seem to have been foreseen, still less organized, by either General Massu or General Salan, the senior French officer in Algeria. The man most responsible for it was a 24-year-old reserve parachute lieutenant called Pierre Lagaillarde, who was recently elected President of the General Association of Algiers students. In Oran the man who led the attack on the local Prefecture and who personally knocked down the Prefect, Pierre Lambert, was likewise a lieutenant, in this case of the "territorial" militia, which in Algeria acts as a kind of civilian branch of the army. In the same way it was two ex-parachute lieutenants who led the march on the French Assembly in Paris the evening of May 13. It is the younger officers or ex-officers in the lower echelons who are pushing their superiors into taking openly anti-republican and mutinous positions. Unlike their seniors—the prototype of whom is General Charles de Gaulle — they never knew the France of Clemenceau and Poincaré, of Joffre and the

MASSU S'EN VA T'EN GUERRE!

MASSU would go to war,
Mironton, mironton, mirontaine,
De Gaulle he would restore
And hold Algeria.

Salan must give commands,
Mironton, mironton, mirontaine,
But none know where he stands
When crowds shout "Ça ira!"

Pflimlin might peace achieve,
Mironton, mironton, mirontaine,
But Massu takes French leave,
Ne sait quand reviendra.

The French right-wing rebel,
Mironton, mironton, mirontaine,
Pflimlin must call Soustelle—
Il faut qu'on finira!

Soustelle will bring Lacoste
Mironton, mironton, mirontaine,
Or Algiers will be lost,
France n'aura plus comme ça.

Lacoste would call de Gaulle,
Mironton, mironton, mirontaine,
And Pflimlin lose control,
With Mollet and Pinay.

MASSU sends out a call,
Mironton, mironton, mirontaine,
And the government must fall
If now de Gaulle should say,

"Le coup d'état, c'est moi!"
Mironton, mironton, mirontaine,
Massu would shout "Hurrah!,
Le jour est arrivé!"

SAGITTARIUS

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taxis of the Marne. The France they have known is one which for more than 20 years has gone from one political and military defeat to the next—the France of Chautemps and Daladier, of Petain and Laval, the Bidaults, Queuilles and Plevens who have juggled with the fortunes of the Fourth Republic as irresponsibly as did the grave-diggers of the Third. If these embittered soldiers and veterans refer so contemptuously today to *"cette putain de republique"*—"this prostitute of a republic"—it is because they have seen republican institutions reduced to meaninglessness by all the abuses of an omnipotent and irresponsible Assembly.

The growing power that these younger officers now wield is one direct consequence of the nature of the Algerian war. As long as the bulk of the French army was in France and Germany, the old hierarchical system of authority, based on divisions and general staffs, remained intact. But as successive divisions were withdrawn from NATO and transferred to Algeria, they had to be broken up in order to adapt themselves to the totally different problems of crushing a guerrilla revolt. The brunt of the work has been borne by captains, majors and colonels who have taken their places alongside Massu in the Algiers "Committee of Public Safety."

To make matters worse, the new French Premier, Pierre Pflimlin, is surrounded by enemies who have already made open attempts to thwart his accession to power. Two of the men who have been talked about as possible members of the "Government of Public Safety" needed to deal with the Algerian crisis, Antoine Pinay and Georges Bidault, actually voted against his investiture. A third deputy, Robert Lacoste, whom François Mauriac has just stigmatized as "that small, fat Cataline of the Dordogne," engineered the malicious campaign of vilification against Pflimlin in Algeria, by openly suggesting that he was preparing a "diplomatic Dien Bien Phu," which is to say, a simple sell-out to the Arabs.

Now, General de Gaulle's benevolent public attitude toward the rebelling officers and the arrival in Algiers of de Gaulle's supporter—the right-wing Deputy Soustelle—has transformed the maneuver to block the investiture of the Pflimlin government into a full-scale insurrection. France must now reap what Lacoste has sown. The outgoing Minister for Algeria thought he could with impunity exploit the *Colons'* fears to justify his own pro-consular record and to prove to his socialist colleagues in Paris his indispensability in Algeria. Seldom has a personal maneuver backfired so disastrously.

The Pflimlin government momentarily has a firm grip on the Metropolitan police but its authority over the army is wobbly. That authority has been further weakened by de Gaulle's saying that he finds the army's seizure of power in Algeria understandable, even reasonable. General Ely's resignation attests to the profound disgust of the army over deputies in Paris who for years lacked the courage to vote for austerity measures to win the Algerian war and to supplant the military strength with timely diplomatic and political action. The new Chief of Staff, General Lorillet, lacks the prestige to reimpose governmental authority over Algerian dissidents. Only two men can probably do so under the existing circumstances. The first is Marshal Juin who openly sympathizes with the Algerian settlers. And the second is General de Gaulle.

CURTIS CATE

Virginia's Public Schools

FIVE SCHOOL districts in the state of Virginia—Arlington County, Charlottesville, Newport News, Norfolk and Prince Edward County—appear to have exhausted all the devices of delaying litigation and are expecting within the next few weeks peremptory federal court orders to begin desegregation next September. If this is to be the Great Showdown, it is appropriate that it should come in the Old Dominion: Of the seven still recalcitrant Southern states, Virginia is the commonwealth where "massive resistance" is most solemnly proclaimed, and where, at the same time, it rests on the shallowest foundations. The state's population is only 22 percent colored; public school facilities are very nearly equal; and there was so little race tension in the state that a number of universities, parochial schools and bus systems were integrated without incident.

But under the aegis of Sen. Harry F. Byrd and his renowned political machine Virginia has moved into the farthermost outposts of "massive resistance." The laws they have passed almost compel closing public schools and turning to segregated private schools to escape integration.

The ruling clique are sedulously preparing the public to blame the closing of schools upon the NAACP and the Supreme Court, and to keep the race issue uppermost. But the outcome must inevitably turn on the question of public education. And it seems inconceivable that the white people of Virginia will give up their public schools to prevent the enrollment of a handful of Negro children in them.

Ask Me No Questions

BY THE NATURE of a rotating Foreign Service most State Department officers are not "area specialists." They may be competent executors or even formulators of policy but for the assessments on which policy is based they must rely, or at least should rely, on researchers and experts tucked away in back offices. Thus the newsman in Washington who wants to keep informed on develop-

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ments in, say, Indonesia, has often gone not to the bureaucrat at the top but to the specialist down the line.

If an individual is far enough down the line, he may have reported back to his superior both what he said and what he heard. But now, if a new Department directive is carried out, all officers will be *required* to report back in writing in a formal memorandum for the files. As a newsman objected at the Department's May 13 daily press briefing, the effect of such a requirement would be

> restrictive . . . to limit conversation and make people who talk with us far more cautious than they otherwise would be. And secondly, if they have to sit down and write the memo, well, why bother with it? Why take on that added chore?

The number of people who would actually "talk with us," he might have added, would also be severely limited by one part of the directive which specifically forbids any individual contact by newsmen with the biggest concentration of specialists—those in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Many reporters regularly covering the department believe that the new directive was inspired, in fact, by Intelligence and Research Chief Hugh Cummings with an assist from Walter S. Robertson. Mr. Cummings is an ex-ambassador to Indonesia who is blamed in this case for nothing more than bureaucratic starchiness. But Assistant Secretary Robertson is already held responsible for our China news blackout and he is at it again, we suspect, when he shuts off legitimate news gathering rather than risk inconvenient questions.

The Butler Bill

SEN. WILLIAM JENNER (R) of Indiana, soon to relieve the nation of his services, is in a valedictory rage about the Supreme Court's "pro-Communist," not to say treasonous, recent decisions, and has been wanting to "do something" about them. And so, in the congenial atmosphere of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, where the memory of the late Pat McCarran is kept green by such as Chairman Eastland of Mississippi and Sen. John Butler (R) of Maryland, Senator Jenner offered a bill simply depriving the Court of jurisdiction in the class of cases in which, by the Senator's lights, the Court has done wrong. Mr. Jenner's bill would have opened up the possibility of 48 different rules concerning points of federal law, including constitutional law, to be decreed by the 48 highest state courts without recourse to any unifying national authority. This was too preposterous to be swallowed even by the Committee on the Judiciary.

Senator Butler of Maryland, however, rode to the rescue with a substitute, which the Committee has now approved. The Butler bill retains one of the jurisdictional provisions of the Jenner proposal, but for the rest addresses itself in omnibus fashion to the merits of a number of the Supreme Court's recent decisions. Among these are the *Watkins* case, which required more specific delineation of subjects of investigation than has heretofore been customary in resolutions creating Congressional investigating committees; and the *Nelson* case, which held that the federal Smith Act reserved to the federal government exclusive authority to punish conspiracies to overthrow the government of the United States, and rendered inoperative to that extent little Smith Acts adopted by the states.

Should the Butler bill be enacted—which at this moment does not appear likely—it would be one of the rashest, most irresponsible Congressional actions on record. The bill deals in each of its provisions with issues of principle that are of the first importance, and for the most part are of constitutional or quasi-constitutional magnitude. Yet it is the product pure and simple of ill-temper and spite. Each one of its provisions would, one might suppose, have been subjected to extensive public hearings. On each the advice of the Department of Justice and of other executive agencies concerned would have been carefully considered. But there have been no hearings. And the Department of Justice is opposed to the bill.

Except only as it attempts to overrule the *Nelson* case, the entire bill is of exceedingly doubtful constitutionality. But at this stage, that is not yet the issue. The issue now is orderly, responsible legislative process. If ever there was an example of the contrary, this is it. We look confidently to the leaders of Congress, who care for the standards of the institution they head, for its integrity and for its good name, to have no truck with this abomination.

The Politics of California

IN THE FASTEST growing and second most populous state, politics is as variable as the weather, and a good deal warmer. Democratic by registration for over 20 years, it has elected a Democratic Governor *once* in this century (and for only one term). This year, feuding Democrats appear more united and hope to elect Pat Brown as Governor. Senator Knowland, however, has staked his political future on denying Mr. Brown the victory. Mr. Nixon, it is assumed, will regard the victory of any California Republican as a boost to his Presidential candidacy.

THE WHOLE colorful, confusing but important panorama of this unpredictable, lively, and mixed-up state will be described for readers of *The New Republic* in an exclusive series of articles by Ronnie Dugger, who has just completed a political tour of California on special assignment for this journal.

Beginning Next Week

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The Superficial Aspect

Who Sent Nixon?

PROTECTION of the honor and dignity of the United States is worth a war; but the nomination of Slippery Dick Nixon is not worth the life of the dumbest doughface in the United States Army.

Until the country is better satisfied as to the purpose of the Vice President's visit to South America, what occurred there had better not be used as a *casus belli*, or even to excuse the threat of military violence. If the real purpose was, as many suspect, not to stimulate good-will but to build up the prestige of the court favorite so as to assure his nomination in 1960, the whole train of incidents is no credit to this country, and a stain upon the Administration.

Yet what chain of reasoning could lead anyone to believe that this devious politician was, or could be, an ambassador-of-good-will? What debt of gratitude did the South American countries owe him? What act of his had commanded the admiration of Latin Americans? What cordial relation existed between him and them? The answers to those questions are a monotonous series of negatives.

The function of an ambassador-of-good-will is not to negotiate treaties or trade agreements but merely to soothe international relations. Hence the first consideration in selecting one should be his popularity in the countries he is to visit. Not many Americans of national prominence command the admiration of the Southern continent, but there are a few. George C. Marshall is one and Jefferson Caffery is another. But why anyone should assume that the Vice President is well and favorably known in that region is beyond conjecture.

His visit to Venezuela, in particular, was, as the doctors say, distinctly contra-indicated. Venezuela is an oil-producing country, and if there is any country in the world in which the oil interests have made themselves beloved of the general populace, its name does not come to mind. We may be sure that the subsidy the then-Senator Nixon received from the California oil interests is well known to the Venezuelan Communists, and that alone was sufficient reason for keeping him out of any oil-producing country.

But if he had no particular qualification for this mission, and one evident disqualification, why was he sent? The obvious answer is not pretty. It is: the build-up. It may have been thought that a triumphant tour through South America would strengthen Nixon's position as the Crown Prince and make him the only possible nominee of the Republican Party in 1960.

If this is the explanation, then the Administration is guilty of gambling with the interests of the United States in the hope of advancing the political fortunes of an individual. It is a serious offense, and in this instance it was worse than a crime; it was a blunder. Far from stimulating good-will, the tour had such an effect that the President deemed it necessary to rush a thousand troops south to insure his messenger's physical safety.

It is beyond belief that this has escaped the attention of the crafty politicians who will have to carry the burden of the Republican campaign in 1960. Present indications are that they will have an uphill fight, at best.

The Republican campaign managers will be asking independent voters to help elect a man whose feelings have reason to be prejudiced against South America. Is that the kind of man to undertake the task of winning the Latin Americans away from Communism? Yet the Nixon tour has demonstrated that the Russians have been making great headway on the continent. They would be materially assisted by the election as President of the United States of a man who once provoked them to conduct of which they are heartily ashamed. However they may regret what they did, they cannot be expected to like the man who caused them to do it.

If the tour was honestly intended to promote good-will it was a boomerang, for it has provoked scandalous displays of ill-will. If it was designed as part of the build-up, it has back-fired even worse, for it was a terrific tear-down.

ALL THIS should have been clear to Washington long ago. It is, indeed, beyond belief that the shrewd old professionals in the Republican Party were unaware of it. But the President's inexplicable partiality for Nixon apparently is proof against all evidence that the man is a political liability. The party has proceeded from one blunder to another, culminating in the fatuity of this tour.

As far as it affects domestic politics, this should be duck-soup to the Democrats, but when it begins to affect foreign relations it passes a joke. Eisenhower has said of Nixon, "He's my boy." There is only one answer to that. It is: All right, Ike, you can have him, but in the name of common sense don't try to cram him down the throats of people who shout from the housetops that to them he is a hissing and a by-word.

GERALD W. JOHNSON

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A Conversation with

JAMES THURBER

"Everybody Is Getting Very Serious"

by HENRY BRANDON

BRANDON: What does really inspire you to sit down and draw?

THURBER: Well, actually, it was a thing just like lighting this cigarette, I think . . . it was a form of relaxation after writing, or when I got stuck on a piece of writing. A great many of the drawings I did, I was unconscious of doing. It was only in 1929 when I shared an office with E. B. White at *The New Yorker* that he began to pick up my drawings—pencil drawings on yellow copy paper—and then, I think in April, 1929, sent one to *The New Yorker* art meeting. I'd done it in about 13 seconds—a seal on a rock gazing at two distant specks and saying: "Hmm - - explorers."

Well, Ross thought it was a gag—Rea Irvin, our Art Editor, drew on my drawing, up in the corner, a head of a seal—Rea being a professional artist and great draftsman—and wrote under it still on my drawing: "This is the way a seal's whiskers go." Andy White promptly the next Tuesday—we had an art meeting every Tuesday—sent it back with a note saying: "This is the way a Thurber seal's whiskers go."

They still rejected it, and then White and I wrote *Is Sex Necessary?*—a burlesque and parody on the flocks of sex books coming out at the time. We took the drawings to the publisher and laid them out on the floor, and three members of the firm of Harper's stared at them and said: "These are, we presume, a rough idea of what you'd like a professional artist to do for the book." And White said: "No, these are the drawings that go in the book."

Well, that really shook them—they almost brought the book out quietly. But then, to everybody's amazement, including Ross's, it began to sell, and he heard about it—and about the drawings—and he came into my office and said: "Where's that damned seal drawing you did—several months ago—that White sent in." And I said: "Where is it? You rejected it, so I threw it away." And he said: "Don't throw things away just because I don't like them—or think I don't. Do it again!" Well, I didn't do it again for two years. And when I did do it again, by sheer accident, it became the best known of all my drawings. In trying to draw the seal on a rock again with pen and ink—and the seal was just the same as ever with a Thurber seal's whiskers—the rock looked more like the head of a bed. So, I finished the bed, put a man and his wife in it and had the woman snarling at her husband: "All right, have it your way—you heard a seal bark!" And there was the seal, right above them, you see. And when that was printed in January, 1932, I got a telegram from Bob Benchley—there was nobody whose opinion any American humorist or cartoonist would rather have had—and he said: "Thank you for the funniest drawing caption ever to appear in any magazine!" And when Ross saw that, I became over his dead body an established *New Yorker* artist. And so it went.

In the end the wonderful thing was that Ross, who had waved these drawings aside as a gag — and then as a "passing fancy fad of the English"—he said that with pleasure and faked gruffness because he loved and admired, as I do, the English—could not get enough of them. Ross just went to any length then to make it possible for my drawings to appear though he had once

JAMES THURBER sketched "The Thurber Dog" for HENRY BRANDON during this tape-recorded conversation at the Hotel Algonquin in New York.

A DAY LATER Mr. Brandon received the following note: "Since I rewrite everything all the way through from five to twenty times it is hard for me to think of my conversational replies being used as my final considered opinions and judgments. Maybe it will come out all right, but here are a few written thoughts."

"I THINK," adds Mr. Brandon, it did "come out all right."

THIS IS THE second of a series of interviews done originally for *The Sunday Times* of London by its Washington correspondent. Mr. Brandon's conversations with LEONARD BERNSTEIN, FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT, BEN SHAHN, MARGARET MEAD and others will appear exclusively in this country in coming issues of *The New Republic*.

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turned them down. Of course, when he turned my first drawings down and they appeared for the first time in a book—he was beside himself. Here was something creative in his own office, something he'd had first shot at, and it had got into the hands of a publisher who published them—and Ross considered publishers a kind of freak. He didn't think they had any intelligence or any sense. Then, of course, he kept at me to send him more drawings and finally I did. But I made him wait a year before I turned them in. Then he found out that I had done 307 drawings for *The New Yorker* with captions, 175 of which had appeared in books.

When I began to go blind, it finally got so that I couldn't draw even with black grease crayon on sheets of yellow paper 5 by 4—they had to deal with them like blankets at one time—then I got so I couldn't draw at all, so Ross went through all kinds of worry and suffering about that and said: "You see, we can arrange all of it."

He decided we would reverse cuts and use new captions; we would cut the drawings up and make permutations. The figures of men and women, dogs, furniture, bridge lamps, so on . . . And he'd send me captions himself. We did that for a while, but it seemed to me it was a fake. The first publication to notice it was *The News Chronicle* of London, England. They were not opposed to it. They just said they detested some of my old drawings with new captions. Finally I said: "Well, if we use captions that you or somebody else devises on drawings that I didn't rearrange, I would have no creative part in it." And then I said: "You mustn't think I grieve about not being able to draw. If I couldn't write, I couldn't live, but drawing to me is a little bit more than tossing cards in a hat." And I think . . . he needed more cheering up about my blindness than I did, you see. That was Ross. That's why it's so wonderful to write about him because he was such a contradictory personality. I imagine Ross now in heaven pacing the Chalcedonian Halls—complaining to some uninterested angel: "What the hell's the matter with the English? Thurber's drawings are not a passing fancy or a fad—they're here to stay. Don't they know that?" Wonderful man to work with.

BRANDON: Did you develop those characters just by chance—inspiration?

THURBER: Yes. Just start drawing, and suddenly you have it. All the best ones started that way with nothing special in mind. And then I would go from the drawing into the caption. If I started with the caption and then drew the picture to fit it, a stiffness was likely to get into the figures, you see. And then the fact that I was not a draftsman—never took a lesson—can't really draw came out. But if the drawings have any merit, it was that they were —some of them—funny. And that's what they were intended to be. They weren't intended to be a special form of art over which I struggled. Because I don't think any drawing ever took me more than three minutes.

BRANDON: It's a sort of—something in between a drawing and a doodle, really—

THURBER: Yes, it is that. I never use the word "doodle"—it always reminds me of a housewife at the telephone trying to get the grocery and being unable to reach them—so she begins to draw—or just make marks or fill-ins—but there definitely is a resemblance to that, yes, since the best ones were more or less unconscious. The one that caused the most trouble at *The New Yorker* was the one I described in this new book called "The Lady On the Bookcase." It showed a nude woman on all fours on top of the bookcase and a man is saying to a lady visitor: "That's my first wife up there. This is the present Mrs. Harris." And he points to another lady. Well, that upset Ross. He called me on the phone in the country and said: "Is the woman on the bookcase dead or stuffed or alive or what?" And I said: "Well, I'll call you back—I'll have to ask." And hung up and called him and said: "My doctor says a dead woman couldn't support herself on all fours, and my taxidermist said that you can't stuff a woman—so she must be alive." And Ross roared into the phone: "Then what's she doing in the house of her former husband with his wife—naked?" And I said: "You have me there, Ross. I'm not responsible for the behavior of my characters." So he printed it anyway.

Later I explained to him that I had tried to draw a wife at the head of the stairs—at the head of a flight of stairs waiting for her husband. Having no skill in draftsmanship, I lost perspective and the stairs turned instantly into a bookcase or what looked like a bookcase, if you made transverse lines—so I made it into a bookcase—and there was this naked lady on top of a bookcase. A great many of the drawings came out accidentally like that—a great many. And it was a great deal of fun not to know what you were going to end up with.

Then, there was the famous incident of Carl Rose's drawing in 1932—very graphic it was, too—of a fencer cutting off his opponent's head and yelling: "Touche!" And the head flies up in the air. Ross thought the Rose drawing—of course, Rose is a fine draftsman and realist—was too bloody and too gruesome. "Let Thurber do it," he said, "Thurber's people don't have blood—you can put their heads right back on, they're as good as new." So, I did the drawing and it was run that way and nobody was horrified. But Paul Nash said: "I agree with Ross completely, that man isn't dead—his head is just off—come off—he's lost his head for a moment."

BRANDON: Considering that you illustrate so much the War of the Sexes—your women particularly have not much sex or sex appeal.

THURBER: It was Marc Connelly who said: "Well, they have for Thurber's men" — when that question was once

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brought up. Ross had brought Marc Connelly and another man, whose name I didn't catch, into my office, and they began to discuss the drawing and Ross said: "Thurber's women don't have any sex appeal." And it was then that Connelly said: "They do have for his men." The other man in the room turned out to be Harpo Marx who, when he did start to talk, could talk. And a very interesting man, too. But, I should say there were times when I wanted, really, to get a pretty woman in a drawing—and I had toyed with the idea of having some other artist do it. Then I'd draw the rest of the drawing 'round it, but Ross didn't go for that one. I mean, a luscious Arno girl, for instance . . . with one of my women. I haven't sent any captions to *The New Yorker* for years, the last one was illustrated by Whitney Darrow. It showed an ardent young lady talking to a gloomy, intellectual young man and she is saying: "When you say you hate your own species, do you mean everybody?" I think that's the last caption of mine they took.

Once I wanted this "dumb blonde" as we say in America, sitting in a bar with a gentleman, saying to her: "You complicated little mechanism, you." It seems to me that could be easily done, but . . . again, that was the kind of thing that frightened Ross. He instantly thought of physical or even sexual mechanism, you see, his mind—he was the cleanest-minded man in the world. He never told a dirty story among men in his life, and he wanted to keep the magazine clean—he *never* went in once in his life for the appeal of sensationalism, or sex stuff.

In one case, a series of Arno drawings of a man and a woman supposedly in a compromising situation on a porch swing—the caption was always passionless, such as "Have you read any good books lately?"—appalled Ross, so he made Arno redraw it. Finally I said that the way we ran the series, the man and woman were approximately as sexually involved as the husband and his sister-in-law at a christening. But that was Ross, you see, getting everything as good as possible. He was afraid of what he called "the functional"—I called him Old-Chief-Afraid-of-the-Functional. Once Ross brought to me an Arno drawing—it showed one of Arno's distinguished Southern gentlemen of the old school and definitely in his late fifties, dancing with an ardent young woman and saying: "Good God, woman, think of the social structure!" Well, that threw Ross—he was afraid of the expression "social structure." "Why?—in the name of goodness—" I asked. And he said: "Well, you know social diseases mean sexual diseases." And I said: "Dismiss it from your mind, Ross." He just questioned everything, you see. He was like a neighbor woman in the Middle West, where he came from, you know. And he was so afraid that some of *The New Yorker* wits would get things in the magazine that definitely do belong elsewhere.

BRANDON: This idea of a War of Sexes—was that inspired

Self-Portrait

by your mother—from the description that I've read of her . . .

THURBER: No, my mother was a great person. I owe practically everything to her because she was one of the finest comic talents I think I've ever known—she really was marvelous. But she died two years ago within three weeks of ninety years. And up into her late eighties she was still comic and played tricks on the telephone with her friends. . . . No, I think it's really from having lived two years—1918 and a part of '20—in France, and comparing the life of French, English and other foreigners from that viewpoint with family life in America. I could see clearly the domination of the American woman over her man as compared with that of other countries. America is a matriarchy, it always has been, it always will be. It became obvious to me from the time I was a little boy that the American woman was in charge. I didn't really definitely plan to set out to do that War—I just drew on my unconscious, I guess, and my store of observations about that. I think it's one of the weaknesses of America, the great dominance of the American woman, not because of that fact in itself, but because she is as a Chinese woman of distinction said to me some twenty years ago, that the American woman was the least interested in national and international affairs and the most ignorant.

BRANDON: But there's a lot of talk about the woman's vote nowadays and its influence . . .

THURBER: Yes, of course, there are so many more women than there are men. The League of Women Voters, the last I heard, had only 127,000 members out of 88 million

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women in this country and it's very hard for them to get members. Women care about other things.

BRANDON: But what is different about the American woman, women, really, from say—

THURBER: I think that Philip Wylie invented the word "Momism." I think that word is a very important word—the mother dominates the son—and every time, I know, when he gets home from school in the summertime or wintertime and slams the screen door and says: "Hey—Mom!" Can I do this—can I do that? Permission from "Mom" is the big thing. Then when Mother turns him right over to life, it's likely to go on, you see. Every man says on the phone—well, I suppose this is true in England, too: "I'll have to ask my wife, George—you'd better ask yours."

BRANDON: Presumably you mean that there won't be any revolt among the American men against the matriarchy—

THURBER: I don't think there will be. Of course, in the series I did—"The War Between Men and Women"—the woman surrenders to the man, but you'll notice in the drawings that each woman has a big rock or club behind her back. In other words, the war is not over, so far as she's concerned.

BRANDON: But take Washington, for instance—I can't think of a single woman who plays an important political role behind the scenes, like a Madame Pompadour or—

THURBER: No—no—that brings us back to their weakness in interest in politics, economy, in national affairs. I was very much struck by the fact that the average American woman I know hated history in college—they just don't like history, they know nothing about it either. So I said that the average American woman, when the war broke out, thought that Pearl Harbor was a movie actress!

BRANDON: I once asked a girl—a married woman—in Moscow, where you have so-called equality among the sexes—how she liked that? And she said she'd rather give up her equality.

THURBER: You mean, she'd rather be the second sex, as the girl in France called it—who wrote the book *The Second Sex*. I do sometimes wish that they would. By the way, to me the most heartening thing that has happened in America for a long time is the Russians getting ahead of us in the Sputniks, because for the first time since the dark age of McCarthy, the Americans are coming to the realization that God likes other countries as well as this one; that it is possible for American superiority to be exceeded, but once we have to buckle down, we buckle down. I think that has been a very fine thing. The six or eight years that went by—those terrible years—when all the American Congress seemed to do was to investigate writers, artists and painters—to me were the dreadful years. All this time Russia was getting ahead of us, all this time we were fighting a new cold civil war—suspecting neighbors, suspecting the very nature of writing, of academic intellectualism, anything—that was a very bad moment in our history—perhaps the darkest we've ever had. But I think we're coming out of that.

We've always had a belief in push-button superiority, and instant lovability — everybody must love us, why shouldn't they, we're Americans!

During the darkest years of the McCarthy period—while many writers seemed to be frightened, possibly because they had belonged to some organization when they were in college, they were afraid to write. But I wrote four or five outspoken pieces, opposing the constant investigation of playwrights, writers of all kinds, because I thought our culture had descended to a pretty low place. Now, when we took the passport away from Arthur Miller —one of the most ridiculous things we ever did, and also one that certainly didn't help our prestige among our allies—I came out, and several of us did, and spoke against that in the *New York Times*. A Congressman had asked him on the stand: "Do you really believe that the artist is a special person?" Then I wrote in *The Times*: "A nation in which a Congressman can seriously ask: 'Do you think the artist is a special person?' is a nation living in cultural jeopardy." Well, that was three or four years ago, and each month now I think we get farther and farther out of the dark shadows of that cultural jeopardy —and it's a darned good thing.

Americans pride themselves on being a nation of humorists, but I'm afraid that our sense of humor and comedy—certainly sense of humor—does not go very deep. America is the country of the gag, the hot foot, the payoff, the belly laugh—and that kind of thing. But a basically, imaginatively humorous country could never have over-emphasized the way we have over-emphasized Americanism. I wrote a small piece, it wasn't published, about our constant use of "Un-American" when we really mean "patriotic." As if patriotism was a monopoly of the Americans. We would be annoyed and frightened if every time we picked up a foreign paper, there were references to "Englishism" — "Welshism" — "Francism" — "Un-French" — "Un-Belgian" — and I have written a little scene in a bar. . . . the husband and his wife get into an argument with a man with an accent, and the husband says: "You must be un-American." He says: "I'm a citizen of Oslo." "Then, he's un-Swiss," the wife says. "No, I think he's un-Danish." The man finally says: "No, I'm just Norwegian." Well, I wrote that about 1951 and there wasn't anybody who wanted to print that, because we did have the jitters.

BRANDON: It all means that, I suppose, Americans lack the faculty to laugh at themselves.

THURBER: Yes, they think they can but they really can't. An old professor of mine at college, Professor Joe Taylor,

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said: "A thing that cannot endure laughter is not a good thing." There was a period—I wrote about this in some of my pieces—in which we were distinguished for our ability—the days of Mencken, Will Rogers, William Allen White and many others—to laugh about us with either a broad sword or a slapstick, you know, making fun of Congressmen. But then we got scared of 'em. And that's a bad thing when we get scared of our Congressmen, because a lot of them are buffoons. When you get right down to it, we're only scared to death in peace times —we're wonderful warriors, you know—but it's the jitteriest country in peace times. Put your head out the window and yell: "HERE IT COMES!"—and everybody rushes out on the street. There was actually, some years ago during the dark age of the McCarthy period, a tremendous hailstorm in Martha's Vineyard—hail the size of golf balls—the hail fell on the ancient town of Edgartown, which was founded during the reign of King James I. I think, named after his oldest son—I may have the kings wrong . . . but they thought: Here come the bombs—they're now the size of golf balls—something new. And everybody ran out on the streets and got slugged on the head with these things, in spite of the orders from civilian security to stay indoors. Our desire to take to the open is a panic urge. We're living on the edge of the abyss. As somebody said—the fascination of the edge of the abyss.

But I think, as I say, I'm very hopeful that America has finally seen that it's got to buckle down and get to work. Our strength is our weakness—but we may get so that we mistake loose talk for free speech and the freedom of liberty for complacency. You see, we don't have to do anything—everything's going to be fine because this is God's country. I did one caption for *The New Yorker* which was printed about six or eight years ago. It showed a meeting of representatives of all the nations of the world —just at the opening of the United Nations—and an American saying: "It's a wonderful thing to cooperate with all our friends and allies right here in God's country." You see, we can't get it out of our minds that this is where God lives—he never even visits anyplace else. If, as I say, we were a nation of humorists, as we think we are, we would appreciate these things.

BRANDON: In this present generation there are few if any humorists, really.

THURBER: It is a curious thing. . . . I did some research on that. In the 1920's when Ross said that humorists were a dime a dozen, they practically were—Sally Benson appeared in 1929 and then in 1930, Ogden Nash and S. J. Perelman; after that the pickings have been very few. We've had Peter De Vries in the last 12 or 14 years, and John McNulty. But the young people are not funny. I found out in addressing college classes — journalism classes years ago—that since the mental weather of the 1920's there's been a definite decline into grimness. They

Harold Ross

used to ask me: "How old is Peter Arno? What is Dorothy Parker like?" And now they ask me what I believe about the future of America—or what is my artistic credo—everybody is getting very serious. You can just sense that change—the beginning of a kind of a chill. It is very hard to sustain humor—the desire for humor—in a period when mankind seems to be trying, on the one hand, to invent a pill or miracle drug that will cure us all of everything and on the other hand to invent a machine for instant annihilation—you just light the fuse and Bang! up go all the healthy people.

Johnny Miller—John Duncan Miller, the former *Times* of London man in Washington, said to me once: "I used to be able to read *The New Yorker* coming up from Washington to New York. Now if you want to finish it, you have to go at least as far as San Diego." Some 3,000 miles. We have got into a thing that Ross dreaded all his life—the magazine is turning grim and long. In the early days, he used to pay a premium for stories under 2,000 words and even word-rate if it was under 1,000. If you ran past 5,000 it was as little as 3 cents a word extra.

BRANDON: In your earlier days at *The New Yorker* new writers with new ideas probably had a much better chance to get a hearing. Now *The New Yorker* has its style—its

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tradition—its format—and everybody tries to conform to that. . . .

THURBER: Yes, yes . . . that's one of the troubles that a magazine is likely to settle into a kind of formula—it's hard. . . . Last year, for the first time in thirty years, I didn't have a piece in *The New Yorker*. It's now a great big business over there—writing and editing—it's terrific. All of us worry about its increase in size, wealth and what I call "matronly girth"—but it lacks comedy. It's very hard to break into *The New Yorker*. They're not really looking for humor—they don't expect it, so they don't really encourage humor. Ross used to say: "We're in a velvet rut"—by which I think he meant the stuff is pretty average, but we're making money out of it. But now we're in a tulle and taffeta rut—'cause everybody's writing about—and this seems to me a curious escapism—their girlhood, young womanhood, first baby, first year of marriage, and so on. . . . Then *The New Yorker* uses so many women on an island—well, that's a form of escape, too, I think. And then our great love of Westerns—the President reads Westerns—and television is almost dominated by Westerns, you know. It's impossible to analyze it offhand, but I do feel that people are trying to get away from the terrible pressure of man as a purely political and cold-war creature—the strain is terrific.

BRANDON: Do you prefer human beings or animals, really?

THURBER: I have my moods. I often think it would be fine if the French poodles could take over the world because they've certainly been more intelligent in the last few years than the human being, and they have great charm, grace, humor and intelligence. My old poodle, who died at 17, had genuine comic sense. . . . But, as I say, when I spoke to the poodle about her species taking over, she said: "The hell with it!" They don't want to get mixed up in it.

But what troubles me most about us today are our children. In his recent "State of the Union" speech, two things the President said amused and depressed me. One was his romantic appeal to the "schoolboy with his bag of books and his homework." Our schoolboys, I am afraid, lack mental discipline. We have a frightened inability to appreciate discipline. We instantly call it, even essential mental discipline, "regimentation," and dismiss it as Communistic. We confuse it with political regimentation. Our kids have given up hard work. Every year, for instance, I get hundreds of letters from English language students from all parts of the United States asking me for biographical material. They don't want biographical material; they want us to do their homework. Only yesterday I had six such letters asking me to write about myself. I wrote back today that I spent two years studying the facts about the Loch Ness monster before doing my story about it, but that I never wrote to it.

The other thing that amused and depressed me about the President's speech was his use of the word "finalize." My most intense dedication is the defense of the English language against the decline it has suffered in this century and particularly since the end of the last war.

My country has always cared little for exactness in language and has always depreciated good English as "book learning." Those of us who are dedicated to good English as the very basis of communication and understanding have been called everything from teacher's pet to egghead and nobody is more to blame than members of Congress. They should be regularly punished by a fine and one day's confinement in the third grade of grammar school.

If we went out into the streets dressed the way we talk, we would be arrested for indecent exposure.

BRANDON: I feel that I have complete contact with you. Can you see me?

THURBER: No, I can't see a thing.

BRANDON: But I have a feeling that you can see me, really—

THURBER: I know, I fool people. I have actually sat all evening with people and they didn't realize that I couldn't see them—at least, dimly—but that's just what the doctors call "accommodation." See, I started to go slowly blind in 1940—I lost my left eye in an accident when I was only six; with glasses I could see very well until I was 45 and then the cataract set in and complications—so that I have every known disease from glaucoma to Grade A iritis and a thing called "sympathetic ophthalmia." But what happened was the sight, which I still have and can't get at, is covered over by what they call "the thickening of the capsule" from which they take the cataract. I now live in a soft diffusion of light—it's very pleasant, it's very soft—it's a light without landscape or figures, you see, just a definite diffusion of light. But I look at voices—people talking—turn my head—because I was always appalled at the blind man who doesn't look at anybody. . . . But that's just a sheer matter of accommodation. The process started in 1940—very gradually—so that I almost was unaware of it—and then it got so I couldn't see.

BRANDON: I sometimes get the impression from your writings that you really would have preferred to live in a different century.

THURBER: Henry James' great desire, and I don't share this with him, was to have lived in what he called the "Baronic Period"—the English 1820's, around there. . . . But I'm satisfied living in this century. If you lived in any other century, you would miss some of the greatest and most appalling things. . . . Well, to use the phrase of the greatest phrase-maker of our time, Sir Winston Churchill: "The awful and magnificent." He was speaking of the A-Bomb—that awful and magnificent weapon—well, this is an awful and magnificent century to live in, and I wouldn't miss that.

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BOOKS & COMMENT

Caesar and the Pirates

by Robert Graves

THE OLD-FASHIONED historical novel popularized by Sir Walter Scott has its charm, though neither Scott nor his imitators troubled to throw their minds back fully into the past. Thus the 19th Century *Zeitgeist* broods over the *Waverley* novels and Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii*, and even over Charles Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth*, which was written with far greater historical care. The tradition of dressing up one's own contemporaries in togas, farthingales, or kirtles and placing them on the appropriate stage is likely to die hard: one Tudor novel of the twenties makes a young noblewoman greet a young nobleman at the Field of the Cloth of Gold with: "I do hate parties, don't you?" More recent publications invent detailed ancient instances of modernistic sexual abandon: a fashion started by Kathleen Winsor's *Forever Amber*, and since refined by busy students of the late Dr. Kinsey. Every new art fashion derived from archaeological discoveries—in Tutankhamen's Egypt, in Minoan Crete, in Etruria—soon provides its crop of costume novels, all without any authentic three-dimensional characters to make them readable.

The Young Caesar, by Rex Warner (Atlantic, Little-Brown; $4.75).

The only excuse I have ever found myself for writing a historical novel is that an obviously untrue or inadequate treatment has been given a real story by the original annalists. If I feel convinced that something very different happened, yet cannot prove it, a suggested restoration in fictional form is tempting. But the novelist needs to be two jumps ahead of the academic historian, know as much as he does, and invent nothing anachronistic or factually disprovable. It is hardly enough to retell accepted history with dramatic embellishments; there should be a ghost clamoring for justice to be done him.

Novels of historical restoration are severely limited in subject. To treat of English scenes between (say) 1350 and 1650, raises difficult linguistic problems —tushery and pshawdom always rear their horrid heads. How much easier one can, as it were, translate Anglo-Saxon or Norman-French into simple modern English! But even that demands the effort of *thinking* in Greek, Latin, and 16th Century Spanish while writing various novels of my own: most authors shrink from the effort. A still worse limitation is that few historical periods contain enough striking individuals (as opposed to types), or sufficient documentation about their personal habits, to justify a novel.

REX WARNER has written *The Young Caesar* as a sort of *History Without Tears*, rather than as a costume novel—I suppose because he had read a film-magnate's recent pronouncement: "Togas are out!"; and because Caesar had no exploitable psychopathic kinks or dark secrets, and never even behaved with humanly attractive inconsequence. He was clear-headed, realistic, fearless, abstemious, unsuperstitious; a resourceful politician; a generous friend; a vigorous womanizer who never allowed his liaisons to hamper his career, but used them to shrewd practical purpose; an aristocrat who understood the word in its literal and now forgotten sense of governmental capacity; a consummate strategist and logistician; a leader who secured the absolute devotion of his troops by never asking more of them than he was willing to undertake himself. Historians have not traduced his character, nor has Mr. Warner unearthed any new material about him. Moreover, Caesar's authentic despatches survive and are worse than useless to a novelist who chooses the pseudo-autobiographical device: being so succinct and limpid that they discourage imaginative embellishment. Mr. Warner ought to have been warned by Cicero's remarks in his *Brutus*:

> Caesar wrote admirably: his memoirs are cleanly, directly and gracefully composed, and divested of all rhetorical trappings. And while his sole intention was to supply historians with factual material, the result has been that several fools have been pleased to primp up his narrative for their own glorification; but every writer of sense has given the subject a wide berth.

IF I were reviewing *The Young Caesar* as serious history, I should check every reference against the original texts, but it does not merit that treatment. A *History Without Tears* demands only the filling out of form HIST. NOV. G.10001 (REV.): "Put a cross in one of the four blank spaces provided."

1) He knows his stuff, and writes convincingly [ ]
2) He knows his stuff, but writes unconvincingly [ ]
3) He does not know his stuff, but writes convincingly [ ]
4) He does not know his stuff, and writes unconvincingly [ ]

I put my cross at 4), after reading Mr. Warner's account of Caesar and the pirates who held him to ransom off the Mysian coast:

> In particular, I disliked their boastfulness and the contemptuous manner in which they used to speak of Rome. . . . I used to call them dunces, ignoramuses, illiterate peasants and all sorts of other abusive names, all of which they deserved. . . . In a civilized world, I informed them, they were quite intolerable; and, though in recent years Rome had, because of her own troubles, slackly permitted them to grow in strength, a time would certainly come when every pirate ship would be driven from the seas. They regarded these remarks of mine as exceedingly amusing and when I added that, so far as they themselves were concerned, I proposed,

NR Summer Schedule

DURING July and August, *The New Republic* will appear every other week, instead of weekly. Issues will be dated July 7, July 21, August 4, and August 18. Weekly publication will be resumed September 1.

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> as soon as I was released, to have the whole lot of them brought to justice, they thought this the best joke of all. Indeed, their sense of humor was as imperfectly developed as were their intellectual faculties.

Caesar then chattily describes how, having purchased his release, he went to Miletus, raised a fleet, and soon captured his captors. The story ends:

> With regard to my prisoners I thought that it would make a clean end to the expedition and would also redound to my own personal credit if I were to have them executed immediately at Miletus, where already, as the result of my exploit, I was enjoying the greatest popularity. However, on second thoughts I decided that it would be more tactful to refer their case to the governor of the province, from whom also, it seemed to me, I was entitled to receive some consideration and some reward. So I brought the prisoners to Pergamus and left them there under guard. I myself went on as fast as I could to Bithynia by the same road as that on which, seven years before, I had first traveled to that country.

THIS breaks one of the main rules that bind a historical novelist: because Mr. Warner's story does not square with the facts given by the two main authorities, Plutarch and Suetonius. Plutarch records that Caesar took the captured pirates to Pergamus, and that when Junius, the Roman governor of Asia, postponed their punishment, he returned "and crucified them himself, as he had often jokingly threatened to do while he was their prisoner." Mr. Warner has also missed the real point of the story. Suetonius writes:

> Caesar was not naturally vindictive; and if he crucified the pirates who had held him to ransom, this was only because he had sworn in their presence to do so; and he first mercifully cut their throats.

The language which Mr. Warner puts into Caesar's mouth is both inelegant and sadly out of key. Caesar could never have used the pleonastic phrase "quite intolerable," nor did he tautologically call the pirates "dunces, ignoramuses and illiterate peasants" but, according to Plutarch, "dunces and barbarians"; and he threatened them with crucifixion, not merely with justice.

As for his alleged comment: "their sense of humor was as imperfectly developed as were their intellectual faculties" —try putting that into Latin! "*Nullum habuerunt sensum umoria*" would mean no more than: "they had no sensation of sexual potency." The modern concept "sense of humor" appears first in James Russell Lowell's *Democracy And Other Addresses* (1886); and is there defined as "that modulating and restraining balance-wheel which we call a sense of humor." Caesar would have been sufficiently conversant with Greek dramatic usages to remark that those pirates missed the tragic irony of his smiling threats: as he was also sufficiently sure of himself to forgive Catullus his damaging satires, and to take no disciplinary measures against troops who sang bawdy songs about him on the occasion of his triumph. But neither he nor any other Roman of rank, however *jocosus*—which meant "witty at other people's expenses"—allowed the least sense of humor to modulate or restrain his ambitions. Hence the Civil Wars; hence the Ides of March; hence the Roman Imperial cult.

A Great Hater

by R. A. Scott-James

FEW MEN, as writers, have built up a great reputation for themselves by dint of being great haters. One thinks of Swift, but there was very much in him besides his contempt for the slavishness of mankind; or Nietzsche, but his hatred of the poor in spirit and the crawlers was balanced by his admiration for the great. There is one man, however, who seems to me to fill the bill perfectly—the Russian story-writer, novelist and revolutionary, Maxim Gorky. Whatever he may have been at the start, however humane and generous in his youth, he ended by being the perfect, the consummate hater. I have been confirmed in this view of him by reading the recently published *Letters of Gorky and Andreev*.

The Letters of Gorky and Andreev, edited by Peter Yershov and Lydia Weston (Columbia; $4.50).

Maxim Gorky, or Aleksei Maximovich Pyoshkov, was born in 1863 at Nijni-Novgorod and died in 1936. Orphaned at the age of nine he went to live with his maternal grandmother, was apprenticed to a shoemaker, but soon began a roving life variously employed as a scullery hand on a Volga steamer, a worker in a factory, a street hawker and a lawyer's clerk. In 1892 he began writing for newspapers and soon after produced books which quickly won attention—fierce, passionate books which depicted tramps and social outcasts and their opposites — swindlers and hypocrites of the bourgeois class. Here was the future Bolshevik in the making; but at first, until about 1905, he was still moved by obviously genuine sympathy for the underprivileged, and gave much thought to the literary problems of form and expression. It says much for his literary acumen that in 1898 or 1899 he discerned the qualities of a writer then little known, Leonid Andreev, got in touch with him and pressed him to go on writing; and soon they were close friends, writing to each other without reserve about their thoughts, their feelings, their aims in literature and life.

The originals of the letters written by Gorky to Andreev are now owned by Columbia University; most of them have not been published before, and none in translation. Mr. Yershov's volume includes letters from Andreev, unfortunately only twelve in number, which have been published in Russian in the Soviet Union. Miss Lydia Weston is the translator.

It is sad that there are no letters from Andreev written at the time when, to judge by Gorky's, the two men must have been so well in accord. The twelve which we have are beautiful, some of them written in the vain hope of stopping the developing quarrel, Andreev begging his friend to be reasonable and to remember their affection. Only at the last does he turn in despair to rend his correspondent and destroy utterly the grounds of the false accusations and

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abuse which, in growing savagery, Gorky had heaped on him. Andreev was up against something worse than the anger of an ordinary man—he was confronted by the incarnate spirit of modern Communism with all its materialism and all its cruelty. It was against this that he was beating his head in vain—a brick wall of irrational, implacable hatred.

ANDREEV as a writer had more in common with Chekhov than with Gorky, but the latter was pleased with his ironical portraits of smug, complacent petty-bourgeois life; but much less pleased when, later, the mystical element in Andreev's nature took charge and led him to themes which, for his friend, were remote from the urgent practical issues of their time. In the earlier letters Gorky is constantly exhorting Andreev to "write, write." "Plunge into the business of writing your whole self, your whole personality." "Fear praise especially, oh Leonid! Each time I hear praise it seems to me that it comes from the lips of a son of a bitch, and that he praises me because he is afraid, the poor creature, that I might have told the truth about him." But already be is beginning to talk of "the smell of hatred." "I feel splendid; I hate everyone with a gay, stormy hatred." And one can guess that he has been reading Nietzsche without digesting him, when he exclaims: "I would like you to feel this inexpressible, indescribable pleasure, this human pride, this strength. . . . Is freedom possible without manliness? Without force? To hell with men without force and manliness."

In 1902 he seems to think that he may have Andreev with him when he writes "Let it be horrible for the petty bourgeois to live, fetter his filthy wantonness with iron links of despair, pour horror into his empty heart!" When we come to the year of the 1905 Revolution we feel that he has burnt all his boats and devoted his work and his soul to the cause of creating an uncompromising revolution. "And so—don't weep, my child, don't weep in vain! Everything goes as it should, and completely properly. Life is built on cruelty, horror, force; for reconstruction a cold, rational cruelty, is necessary, that's all. They are being killed? They must be killed." He shouts his disgust with those who would sign peaceable manifestos. Above all he detests the liberals, who would hurry slowly and believe in compromise. "Oh my friend! How I would like to see the liberals as corpses! . . . I press your hands. Greetings to your family."

After the 1905 Revolution Gorky went into exile, got into hot water when he visited America, and soon settled in the island of Capri, stuffing his ears against the songs of the Syrens—a strange place to choose to sit and nurse his hatred. They still corresponded, Andreev from Finland, Gorky from Capri, where once his friend visited him. In 1906 Andreev evidently felt that their relationship was changing, and wrote to Gorky to ask why that was so, but received no adequate answer. The letters leave us in little doubt as to who it was that was changing. Gorky was becoming harder and harder, more resolute in his materialism, more fanatical in his Socialism, narrower in his interests, less tolerant of any emotions that did not serve his political cause. Andreev, now constantly under severe criticism, has to be on the defensive:

> One has to live either the way you live or the way I want to live, either stand in the very whirlpool of life and create it, or retreat a distance from it and try to think about it. My spirit inclines towards the second alternative. It seems to me that I have seen and felt and even known enough, since, drunk or sober, gay or sad, I have never stopped looking, and whole trunks full of observations lie within me and I have already absorbed a great deal and given away nothing. To give obliges one to comprehend, and how can I do that when thousands of windmills whir their arms before my nose, when I lose perspective from my closeness to things, and Artsybashev's impotent organ covers the moon and the stars, when the voice of the policeman rings in my ears louder than the voice of God Himself. I want to understand, to understand, but I have seen enough.

The estrangement was becoming more complete. Indeed on Gorky's side it was turning to hostility. He was losing his capacity to admire the artist in Andreev, and basing his criticisms not on the literary quality of the work considered but on the degree in which it echoed his own views. From criticizing the work he turns to criticizing the man. Andreev pleads with him. "I can't imagine what point of view would justify your being hostile. . . . My errors aren't me. . . . I have not changed." But Gorky had. He turns to angry abuse. Not content to say that Andreev is too literary, too passive

A Floridian Museum of Art

THERE's a stone deer in the garden, and two or three nude
Discus throwers (old Greek), as well as the God
Neptune, out of his element, staring
Morosely at his corroding feet as if wondering
How a god, an alien track star or even a deer
Got stranded here.

Behind the garden, Spain (or perhaps it is Italy)
Rises up on more than a score of delicate
Renaissance pillars behind whose arches
The works of Rubens, El Greco, Joshua Reynolds
And a number of other mere tourists in Florida (Italy?)
Hang out of the rain, and the peltings of history.

Above and beyond the pillars, standing sedately
Against the sky on a rooftop balustrade
Is a squadron of muscular Jasons and soft stone maidens
(Roman?) who must have arrived only lately.

And if one stands in the garden surveying this scenery
Through the handsome legs of one of the athletes (nude)
One may see a fully clothed maiden from maybe Vermont
Having her picture taken by—is it Rembrandt?

REED WHITTEMORE

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to life, he goes on to accuse him of vainglorioussness, ambition and even venality. At last Andreev can stand no more, and gives the answer which his friend deserved:

> Your letters . . . were impermissably and causelessly coarse, sometimes approaching street swearing in character, causelessly malicious and smugly unjust. I would even call them cynical, they were so coarse and gave so little evidence of any respect for your own words and for mankind generally. Even if you have no reason to respect me, that doesn't relieve you of the obligation to be polite and self-contained and not to judge categorically and peremptorily about matters of which you know nothing.

It was a lamentable ending to a great friendship. The series of letters which tell the whole story have something of the effect of a tragic drama—tragic in the true sense, for the persons concerned are of heroic stature, and the issue in which they are involved are of universal import. Gorky was a man whose mind—if one can apply such an expression to the mind—had a sort of animal force, capable (at the start) of great tenderness and great ferocity; but the ferocity and the mental dogma which nourished it crushed out the tenderness. Andreev was a man sensitive, imaginative, reflective who became more and more concerned with the mystical elements in life and human relations. Gorky smashed the friendship because he ceased to be human, becoming like one of those "creatures that once were men." And he ceased to be human because he gave himself up to that sort of hatred and cult of cruelty which has been one of the marks of Russian Communism, which indeed his sinister influence helped to inculcate in the Communist regime. These letters, telling the poignant tale of the destruction of a great friendship, also serve to present in microcosm the story of the major tragedy of Russia.

Will Lawrence Durrell Spoil America?

by Gordon Merrick

THE ENGLISHMAN, Lawrence Durrell has achieved something relatively rare in this country. He has acquired a literary reputation without benefit of large sales. Much has been written about his "poetic" prose. On the first page of his recently published book about Cyprus, *Bitter Lemons*, we get this:

Bitter Lemons, by Lawrence Durrell (Dutton; $3.50).

> Cloud and water mixed into each other, dripping with colours, merging, overlapping, liquefying, with steeples and balconies and roofs floating in space, like the fragments of some stained-glass window seen through a dozen veils of rice-paper.

Rice-paper! How elegant!

Much of Durrell's prose is on this order, the image at all costs, any image, if an apposite one is not immediately at hand.

Inevitably, since he is obviously a man who is enchanted with words if not always sharply sensitive to them, he strikes true from time to time and one is left with the question of whether it is better to try and fail than not to try at all.

In any case, here is a man who writes individualistically and with a certain bludgeoning determination which might be termed a style. This sort of writing is more characteristic of Americans than of the graceful, reticent British and might have something to do with Durrell's current American vogue. Also, his exoticism must come as a relief after the floods of sociological reports which pass as fiction in this country. He writes of strange places, strange people, all enveloped and obscured in his misty feverish romanticism.

In a preface to *Bitter Lemons,* the author states categorically that "This is not a political book. . . ." This is an astonishing claim to make about a book dealing with Cyprus from 1953 to 1956, and Durrell fails to make good his boast, of course. Roughly half of his book is concerned with politics, but how reluctantly

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is he led to face the unhappy facts, how apologetic when he is finally forced to admit that people are being blown to bits all around him!

His intentions are so good at the start. He arrives on the island with reassuringly erudite thoughts (". . . How could I forget Catherine Cornaro, the last Queen of Cyprus," he wonders at one point, and those of us who are in no position to remember her must stand aside in awe) and enough money, he hopes, to buy a house.

We see him making his first tentative contact with the natives, triumphing over occasional churlishness with wit and tact. We see him drinking great quantities of wine, thus winning the undying devotion of the simple folk with whom he has chosen to live for four or five years. He even finds a house he can afford. We seem to be entering upon a standard island idyll.

Then the cast of characters expands to include visits from Stephen Spender, Freya Stark and other such hardy adventurers. It is only these visits, we are told, that make island life bearable. This is a jarring note. What of the wine and the poetic landscape and the hard-won friendship with the quaint villagers? Stephen Spender seems a poor substitute for spiritual communion with Catherine Cornaro, the last Queen of Cyprus. Has Durrell's prose obscured the fact that we are dealing with just another psychologically displaced person, a type all too familiar to anyone who knows the Mediterranean world, always on the move to find the place where his dollars or pounds will go the furthest, erecting the picturesque into a cult to screen from view the howling emptiness of peasant life, self-pitying, totally irresponsible?

If Durrell had been content to go on being charming about Cyprus, this question need hardly have been raised, but there is the political question and since he must inevitably touch upon it, it is well to get as clear a picture of the man as possible.

His view of the Cyprus case is simple, although he takes a good many pages to state it. Briefly, it was all a dreadful mistake. Something should have been done to avoid it. Yet when he is offered a government job in which he might conceivably have contributed something to a solution, he drags his feet, postpones taking it as long as possible and finally gives in (one gathers that he was low on funds) with many a sigh of regret. Thereafter, when he encounters friends or acquaintances who have been arrested as terrorists, he lectures them like schoolboys (which many of them were) or simply turns his back on them in disgust. They have been guilty of illegality.

This is the charge he levels at them and it is this that he can't forgive. If he hadn't written these pasasges, for once, in the simplest language, one would be obliged to search for some hidden or obscure meaning in them. Illegality! Rebels are to be condemned because rebellion is illegal.

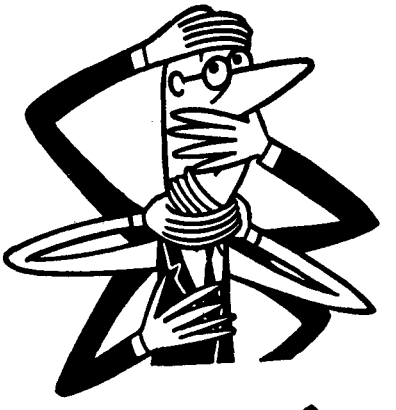
Reference was made above to American fiction in connection with *Bitter Lemons* and this might be thought a slip, considering that the book is reputedly a record of an actual visit to an actual place. But all of Durrell's work is fiction, in the sense that it is intensely subjective. His people and places exist only in his mind. His Corfu and his Rhodes, about which he has also written books, are not the Corfu or the Rhodes you and I might see, nor is there any attempt to make them so.

His novel, *Justine*, published just a few months before *Bitter Lemons*, is by the same token a travel book. The method used is the same, the same loose-jointed construction, the same brilliant character sketches of people who are scrutinized and then dropped, the same fervid evocation of lunar landscapes. The great difference in *Justine* is that that here we get a clearer notion of Durrell's attitude towards women. It is adolescent and, again, self-pitying.

In other hands, Justine would probably turn out to be just a spoiled, incurable nymphomaniac who deserves to be beaten or jailed, but to Durrell she is the stuff of song and he revels in every pang of suffering she causes him. Woman is a mystery, inscrutable, and all his men take an awful beating from her. Life is a woman, he seems to be saying, as his first-person narrator is tossed helplessly about in a world inhabited by homosexuals and drug addicts and incurable invalids.

This sort of mystification is pretty feeble for an age of near-reason. The least we can do is go on trying to find some meaning in life. Durrell has given up. His romantic poet's cry of despair sounds awfully like the wail of a child who feels that he's been mistreated.

What, then, are we to make of Durrell's critical triumph in this country? One might, like Durrell with life, write it off as a mystery, but he shares characteristics with other currently accepted writers which probably provide a clue. He is obscure, to a point where one may legitimately wonder if obscurity isn't simply a device to disguise his own emptiness. His only message is disgust, which must be a comfort to those who shrink from grappling with the complexities of contemporary life for fear of coming to some nonconformist conclusions. He is firmly lined up with the fashionable Freudian school which holds that an exclusive preoccupation with social and sexual misfits is the sign of superior penetration and sensibility. His political blindness is symptomatic of an age in which man has lost the will to shape and control his destiny.



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MOVIES

Whither Welles?

IN 1941 Orson Welles was co-author, director, and star of *Citizen Kane* which some people (including myself) think the best serious film ever made in this country. In 1958 he is the screenwriter, director, and star of *Touch of Evil* (a Universal-International release). It was given its New York première as half of a double bill at a Brooklyn theatre. From London comes word that the critics there were not invited to review the picture.

The immediate, incorrect conclusion is that Welles has declined sharply in powers. But his new picture, while not in the same galaxy with *Kane*, is an exceptionally good thriller, stunningly directed. Quick "liquidation" of a film is frequent nowadays to reduce advertising and promotion overhead; that might —just possibly — explain New York's behavior. But London's fear of the critics remains inexplicable. Indeed the

Touch of Evil (Universal-International).

Sunday Times critic there sought it out and praised it. Are there so many better pictures available that this one has to be released furtively?

The story of *Touch of Evil* moves back and forth across the Mexican border (at Tijuana, perhaps?). A Mexican narcotics detective (Charlton Heston, with black hair) and his new bride (Janet Leigh) are on their honeymoon there when a bomb explodes in the trunk of an American mogul's car. Welles, as a local detective, enormous with fat and padding, investigates the murder and crosses paths with Heston, who is being pursued by the head of a dope ring. Heston accidentally discovers that Welles has planted evidence in the apartment of a suspect in the bombing. Welles and the dope chief (Akim Tamiroff) conspire in a plot against him which leads Welles to murder his accomplice and ends in Welles' own death at the hands of a betrayed, adoring lieutenant.

Curiously, the film is not a great deal clearer or intrinsically more interesting than this synopsis, yet it is gripping. This is because Welles is one of the most imaginative film directors alive. The general effect is as if someone had suddenly pushed you flat against a wall, pinned you there, and told you a murder story. Afterwards you reflect that the story wasn't really much, still you couldn't budge while it was being told. Welles' mastery of hurtling movement, of rhythmic variety, of light and depth, his unerring sense of the dramatically ugly, take the eye from point to point as if a hand were on your neck forcing you to look there, then there, then there.

SOME of Welles' usual mumble and pose are present in his own acting; there is in the beginning a directorial assumption that you know what's going on —which makes it a little difficult for a time to know what *is* going on; and so far as these things arise out of Welles' waywardness, they are annoying. But behind some of this, at least, there is purpose. Welles has always tried to blur the line dividing life from art, to lead you over easily into art at the same time that, paradoxically, he uses highly sophisticated artistic means. Sometimes there has been more blur than anything else, particularly in his acting; but frequently, in his direction, this procedure has given his films a wonderful double feeling of life overheard yet ingeniously arranged.

The opening scenes of this picture— the bustle around the burning car—are good examples of Welles at his best and worst; you can't possibly take your eyes off the screen, but you can feel your brow furrowing as you wonder who *that* character is, then feel it unfurrow as you put the pieces together. The very first sequence, under the titles, proclaims Welles' quality. There is a close-up of the dial on a time-bomb in a man's hands, then we look over it down a long shadowy arcade towards a laughing man and woman who approach; the camera pulls back and high up as the assassin races along a dark sidestreet to plant the bomb in the car, the laughing couple drive off, and we follow them through the crowded Mexican streets while the music ticks away on the sound track. There are point and sweep, precision and thrust for you, all in a sequence of two minutes. The story is not only begun startlingly (not a difficult trick in itself) but in such a way that you know the director has the instincts of a painter, a musician, a dramatist and of Dickens's Fat Boy (who loved to make their flesh creep). What a relief to know so soon that, whatever it may lack, the film cannot be boring.

THE CAST is generally adequate, with Joseph Calleia particularly good as the betrayed lieutenant and a neurotic motel attendant particularly overdone. Several *Kane* veterans, Joseph Cotten, Ray Collins, and Harry Shannon, are briefly present, and Marlene Dietrich, bewigged, is an unlikely Mexican madam. The photography by Russell Metty is superb.

The question as to why a man of Welles' directorial stature devotes himself to such inferior material does not stand alone. The reverse of that question is: why did he make a hash of such films as *Macbeth* and *Othello?* The former seemed a piece of mere caprice, like a naughty boy doodling on a mural; the latter had some beautiful shots of Cyprus and a fascinating performance of Iago by that all-round theatrical wizard, Micheal MacLiammoir of Dublin, but Welles cut away from all his own big moments like a thoroughbred jumper electing to walk around the barrier.

Soon the question resolves into: why hasn't Welles had one of the greatest directorial careers in film history? The answer may lie more with a psychoanalyst than a critic, but one can hazard a sympathetic guess. His innate gifts brought him so much success so early that he lacks the discipline of failure. Not every effort of his first years was successful, but very early acclaim shaped his ego in such a way that he could attribute any failure to a deficiency in the

Notes on Contributors

ROBERT GRAVES is, among other things, the foremost historical novelist of our century. Readers who dispute this claim are invited to submit the names of rival candidates for this honor, together with an explanatory letter. R. A. SCOTT-JAMES has been active in British letters for more than sixty years. GORDON MERRICK is a young American novelist who has recently returned to the US after several years in the Mediterranean countries. His newest book is *The Hot Season.*

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material, to blindness in the public, to anything but himself. Thus he has never developed a sense of responsibility to the audience—not to the mass audience but to the most demanding audience he could envision. Without that sense, no matter how talented, one always remains something of an amateur.

Still his gifts exist, his achievements stand. I have seen *Citizen Kane* ten times, the last time within the year, and would see it again tonight if I could. (How many of the outstanding films of 1941 are worth one re-visit?) Each viewing brings out new dimensions, new textures; each viewing makes clear how much directors like Huston, Lumet, Ritt, Delbert and Daniel Mann owe to it. If D. W. Griffith "invented" film direction, Welles took it—in one leap—to a point past which no American has yet proceeded.

What will his future be? As an actor *per se,* one expects little of him; his performance in *The Long, Hot Summer* seems to be a test of how far he can "ride" his director (Ritt). But his own directorial talents are as striking as ever. If *Touch of Evil* had come from France directed by, say, Henri Georges Clouzot, it would now be playing at all the art houses, and phrases like "structural plasticity" and "delicate diabolism" would be filling the critical air. Nevertheless, exciting as it is, the film is not good enough for its director. After seventeen years Welles does not need to prove that he has gifts, he needs to use them. He has plenty of time left in which to make fine cinematic art. It is a plain but not simple matter of discipline and aspiration.

STANLEY KAUFFMAN

Correspondence

(Continued from page 3)

all shades of differing opinion as to how such re-unification might be brought about. But every voice concurred in one basic axiom; namely, the re-unification of Germany is *good*, provided that it can be accomplished upon any terms other than purely Russian ones.

I have looked in vain for one dissenting voice, but nobody is willing to question the basic assumption that the re-unification of Germany, *per se*, is a good thing. Good for whom?

Two world wars have come close to shattering all civilization on this earth. To over-simplify the causes of these struggles would be foolish; there were many stresses and strains in the fabric of peace. But the prime cause of war in 1939, as in 1914, was *"Deutschland über alles!"*

We know that the American and British people want peace. We feel quite certain that the Russian people want peace. But if there are 100,000,000 united Germans, under Prussian leadership and traditions, what will they want most? Peace or hegemony? I don't know the answer, but I do know they answered the same question in 1914, and again in 1939. And I know that there is another famous old German saying, which reads: "Alle gute dinge sind drei" (All good things come in threes).

ROBERT WILLIAM

New York City

► *An Overall Peace Agreement*

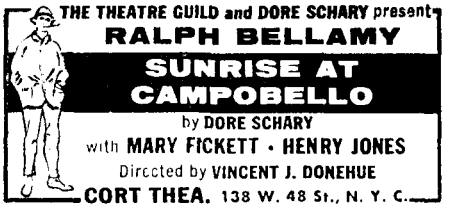
SIRS:

FIRST, Russia having apparently made satisfactorily its latest H-bomb tests, and so taking advantage of rising world pressures against nuclear tests, now proposes discontinuance of further testing. But, since we are evidently behind Russia on the testing score, we suggest in addition, discontinuance of further nuclear military production.

Next, Russia could hardly agree to that, because we have presumably a much larger stockpile of already produced bombs; so it comes up with the idea of total prescription of nuclear weapons, including destruction of existing stockpiles.

But, obviously (as Selwyn Lloyd has openly stated on behalf of Britain), we can not go along with that, because Russia would then have an overwhelming superiority of conventional armaments, and so could easily conquer favorably located areas, especially in Asia and the Near East.

Now, what would be the logical next move by us? Rationally, would not our topping counter proposal be total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disarmament—conventional along with nuclear — down to internal security needs? And to fix responsibility for effective implementation on the reconstituted United Nations, through its own-recruited inspection and police forces? If we made that proposal, what would be Russia's conclusive move? It could be agreement, for Russia too needs desperately relief from monstrous military expenditures in preparation for a war which would bring total disaster upon itself, as well as upon us and the world. Really, is not the proposal for overall peace agreement the only subject that can have fruitful results in Summit discussions?

JOHN BAUER

Chatham, N. J.

► *Stevenson and the Presidency*

SIRS:

GREETINGS to Alma Clinger and to her lament over the probability that the Pros in the Democratic Party will not again nominate Mr. Stevenson for president. I recommend a cure for her "insupportable frustration," namely that she muster every argument to convince those hardened Pragmatists that another time he can *win!*

Possibly by 1960 it will be sociologically fashionable to vote for a candidate who projects a public image of maturity, discipline and political know-how. Possibly by 1960 what he had to say in 1952 and in 1956 about a new America will begin to penetrate.

Chins up, Mrs. Clinger!

E. R. SAUL

Washington, D. C.

" . . . A prophet system"

SIRS:

ALMA CLINGER writes (*NR*, May 5) of her "well-nigh insupportable frustration" due to the conviction that the Democratic Party will by-pass Adlai Stevenson, "the one man in America who has the intelligence, brilliance, knowledge, ability and dedication for the huge task of repairing the wreckage by Eisenhower and Dulles."

Granted the wreckage, but isn't it unbecoming for a liberal to proclaim so loudly America's dependency upon a prophet system?

BRUCE A. KEPPEL

Berkeley, Calif.

► *Hollywood's Ninety-Percenters*

SIRS:

I AM WRITING in reference to Mr. Stanley Kauffman's bad-tempered critique "Hollywood's Ninety-Percenters." (*NR*, May 12).

Taking *Twelve Angry Men* as an example, Mr. Kauffmann shares the sin of eleven of the jurors: he condemns the defendant with prejudice and through his own psychological set, refusing to analyze the facts. Let us consider the story of the picture: it tells of the attempt of one juror to examine a criminal case from an unbiased standpoint, against the ridicule and prejudice of the majority of the jury, the juror's analysis of the facts and distortions presented by the prosecution and defense (in effect doing what the judge told them to do: weigh and analyze before reaching a verdict); the proving of his main point, that the evidence was not conclusive, and his final efforts to put across the point that the basis of American criminal law is that if there is any doubt as to an individual's guilt, that person must be considered innocent. . . . If the defendant had been convicted by the jury, it would have been an entirely different story with one of several different "points" to be made.

I wish to remind Mr. Kauffmann and all the others to whom Truth and Unhappy Ending are synonymous, that life is not all black. Good things happen to people as much, if not more, than bad things.

V. KELRICH

Beverly Hills, Calif.

► *Religion at Harvard*

I WAS intrigued with William Bartley's analysis of the religious trend at Harvard University. I believe that Mr. Bartley is correct in assuming that Paul Tillich is sort of the hub of this new theological ferment, but it is strange that he should speak so respectfully of Whitehead without recognizing that a basic metaphysical kinship exists between the philosophy of Whitehead and that of Tillich. Tillich's contention that "there is no criterion by which faith can be judged from outside the correlation of faith" is in a sense a reaffirmation of Whitehead's "doctrine of internal relations" . . . his concept of faith is largely a restatement of what Kant and other great thinkers have affirmed, namely, that the great truths of life transcent the symbolism of words and rational explanation. The faith which Tillich expounds is known experiential awareness rather than by the sophistry of words. Furthermore, Tillich's idea of "ultimate concern" makes sound logic even though cognitive reason may well declare such "concern" to be transcendent and therefore beyond knowing.

Of course I go along with Mr. Bartley and *The New Republic* in their active concern over the immediate social dilemma and I certainly cannot accept the doctrinal escapisms which characterize so much contemporary religion. I feel sure, however, that a careful reading of Paul Tillich's social views proves that he is not dodging the immediate world isues for the abstractions of theology and metaphysics.

JOHN H. BATES

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